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DCFS MEMO 2006 -

STATE OF WISCONSIN  
Department of Health and Family Services  
Division of Children and Family Services

To: Area Administrators/Assistant Area Administrators  
Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare  
DCFS Bureau Directors  
County Departments of Community Programs Directors  
County Departments of Developmental Disabilities Service Directors  
County Departments of Human Services Directors  
County Departments of Social Services Directors  
Group Foster Home Licensees  
Child Placing Agency Licensees  
Licensing Chiefs  
Tribal Chairpersons/Human Services Facilitators

From: Burnie Bridge, Administrator

Re: Policy Regarding Allegations of Child Maltreatment Against Foster Parents

Many foster parents experience allegations of child maltreatment at some time during their licensure. When allegations occur, foster parents have expressed feeling isolated and cut off from any communication with their agency, children in their home, and other foster parents. This experience has a direct impact on foster parent satisfaction and retention.

This memo requires all county agencies to establish a policy that outlines how the agency will work with foster parents when allegations of child abuse or neglect by a foster parent occur. It also outlines what topic areas must be contained in such a policy and provides a sample policy as a reference.

Agency-specific policy to describe the process for working with foster parents when allegations of child maltreatment occur must include the following:

- How and when the agency will provide copies of agency and state policies regarding allegations of child maltreatment by foster parents to licensed foster homes;
- Information that will be provided to the foster home when a child is placed to assist in the identification of any challenges or concerns regarding the child;
- Notification to the foster family that an allegation has been reported, including when notification will be provided and by what agency staff;
- Identification of what agency will be conducting the investigation;
- Identification of how and under what circumstances law enforcement may be notified or involved;
- Standards for the removal of children, including birth, foster, and adopted children, in the home in the event of an allegation of child abuse or neglect;
- Communication between the foster parent and the agency during the investigation, including the nature of the communication and with what agency staff;

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- Follow-up after the investigation is completed, including results of the investigation, subsequent licensing action, support services, or additional actions and a foster parents's ability to appeal any actions or decisions.

The attached sample policy was developed in collaboration with foster parents, foster care staff, and child protective services staff from county and state agencies. Foster parents suggested that information, communication, and support from an agency before, during, and after an allegation and investigation of child maltreatment by a foster parent will have a significant positive impact on their ability and willingness to continue to provide quality care to foster children.

Please review the attached sample policy for guidance in the creation or revision of agency policy explaining the process of assessing and investigating foster parents when allegations of child maltreatment are reported.

Agencies are required to have a policy in effect by October 31, 2006 when the foster parent handbook, Item K.5. in the PEP, is issued. Agencies will be required to include policies specific to their procedures for investigation and assessment of allegations of child maltreatment by foster parents in their handbooks.

To access information about Wisconsin's Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) and the Program Enhancement Plan (PEP), please visit the CFSR web site at <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/cwreview/cfsr.htm>

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MEMO WEB SITE: <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/partners/local.htm>

C: Foster Care Coordinators  
Directors, Private Child Placing Agencies  
County Child Protective Services Supervisors  
Tribal Child Welfare Contact Persons

Attachment

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